
FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE MEETING

MINUTES

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Appointed Task Force: Karen Lynch, Chair, Denise Arsenault and John Bento

Task Force Members: John Saviano, Edward Mara, Karen Binder, Cheryl Burns, Cara Cromwell, Rebecca Fikiet, Melissa Labonte and Susan Rancourt

Karen Lynch called the meeting to order at 6:12 PM.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: John Bento motioned to approve the minutes to the June 23, 2009 Meeting; Denise Arsenault seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Assignment of New Members to Course of Action (COA) Subgroups

Karen Lynch said John Saviano has proposed an idea for consideration; putting an addition on to the back of Guiteras School; Guiteras is the only Bristol school that has sufficient space to consider an addition. Ed Mara commented that administration had bantered around the idea of adding 6 classrooms to the back of the Guiteras gym; the front of the building is not feasible for environmental reasons. The thought was a two level addition, with 3 classrooms and a utility room on each floor; some of the gym space could be used for cafeteria space. John added that the fencing around the field would have to be moved back about 20 feet. Karen also said that the dugout would have to be moved. Karen assigned John to COA #3 to further explore the idea.

COA Subgroup Updates

COA #1: Maximizing Current School Space (John Bento, Leader, Rebecca Fikiet, Susan Rancourt and Cheryl Burns)

John reported the group has developed three options:

- 1) Place a track of Bristol students at Hugh Cole School**
- 2) Place entire 5th grade at Hugh Cole School**
- 3) Place entire 5th grade at Kickemuit Middle School**

The group has met with Chuck Mello and Mike Carbone and both are open to discussion on different ideas.

Discussion on Option 1

John Bento explained that Hugh Cole has sufficient space to support an extra track; the group focused on the old wing. Currently, all grades have 4 classrooms except grade 4, which has 3; all classes have 22 - 24 students. There are approximately 20 Bristol students at Hugh Cole who were former Warren residents allowed to stay after moving to Bristol. Adding a full track of Bristol students still leaves three classrooms for Warren growth.

John Saviano pointed out that when the addition to Hugh Cole was built, each wing (old and new) was planned to have its own office space.

Cara Cromwell asked if the extra track could be used as "swing space" and be considered an "emergency" use of space allowed by enabling legislation? Could we get clarification from Andrew Henneous? John Saviano said the reason Warren voted down the change to legislation was to prevent Warren students from being bussed to Bristol. Ed further explained that an "emergency" would mean every bit of classroom space in Bristol was used up, including art and music space for classrooms, or a building burned down; Ed will consult with Andrew and will follow up on Karen's attempted meeting with Diane Mederos.

The selection of Bristol students to attend Hugh Cole was discussed-- would it be from a defined area or town wide; all school zone boundaries may have to be adjusted. This would be for District Administration to decide, in concert with the bus company. The students would be totally integrated. The selection process would be a p.r. issue and has the potential for a great deal of friction. There still exists in Bristol a somewhat negative or less desirable opinion of Hugh Cole. As an enticement, the many positives of Hugh Cole should be presented in a pamphlet, i.e. large playing fields, use of Kickemuit track, mentoring connection to Kickemuit, ample parking, proximity to community playground, wooded area with trails, one story, student lockers, community based atmosphere, Feinstein funding, Lobster Tail Publishing, computer lab, placing students with their friends would be a priority.

Also discussed was an idea from the past of creating a science and technology magnet program at Hugh Cole; perhaps create a test bed for 2 ½ 3 years and expand access if there is interest. This would address the immediate population problem; the long term fix would be open another school or build an addition.

The Bristol students closest to Hugh Cole are in the Rockwell district, which may make Hugh Cole a harder sell. A questionnaire could be sent to parents with specific program details. If put to a vote of the populace, the vote could be decided by a majority of the voters as a

whole (as was the case in the last financial town meeting), rather than by a majority of each town. Also, administration must be on board with the concept.

Ed mentioned that this option has a serious fiscal impact, but he is very supportive. Although the District will survive on \$1.4M less funding this year, next year it will go down another \$1M if we get level funding. John Bento said we will have to develop triggers, such as 26 students in classes.

Discussion on Option 2

„Í Placing all 5th graders at Hugh Cole will fill 11 classes; there is sufficient space, with 3 ÿ 4 rooms left for Warren growth; if Warren population grows significantly, we would have to build an addition to Hugh Cole or send Bristol students back to Bristol.

„Í Families would have to give permission for this, or legislation would have to be changed.

„Í Fifth grade Bristol families would not feel any ownership to the school in one year's time.

Discussion on Option 3

Placing 11 fifth grade classrooms at KMS would require trailers or an addition; the entire school would have to convert to a 5-day cycle, teachers would have to become middle school certified and more teachers would have to be hired;Xthis option is not feasible.

John Saviano mentioned that Middletown just moved their 4th graders to their junior high school and parents are upset.

COA #2: Build an Additional School (Cara Cromwell, Leader, and John Bento)

Cara cannot advocate this option, it is a lead balloon, politically unpopular, and demographic studies project a K-12 decline over the next 10 years so it is unnecessary. Even if the economy were to improve and enrollment increase, more students would then go to private schools. If stimulus money is granted, there are many other projects eligible. The cost of land and building a two-track school is approximately \$8M. John Saviano brought up the idea of taking property by eminent domain. The information developed by Mt. Vernon Group on a new school on Naomi Street will be resurrected and reviewed. Ed pointed out that we have all new building requirements now, it takes two years for approval, and we must prove we have exhausted all possibilities. Cara felt that would be difficult to prove with a number of empty school buildings in Bristol.

COA #3: Use Empty Buildings (Denise Arsenault, Leader, David Barboza, Karen Binder, Joe Ciullo, Melissa Labonte, Diane Mederos, John Saviano and Diane Williamson)

Denise reported she and Melissa want to tour Rockwell and Guiteras to assess possibility for expansion; they would also like to have

information on the operating costs for each building. Melissa commented that a five-year plan does not give enough information or warning to taxpayers; a 25 year plan would show that long term interests are being protected; she feels tax payers must be warned that whatever we come up with is going to cost the towns money. There is still a residual public feeling that Rockwell is a better school. Karen Lynch said Rockwell space is maxed out; long range goals are indeed needed; she reiterated the charge of this task force is to fix enrollment issues and we must look at what to do if and when we do not have seats. Ed said we can easily do a 25 year plan; now that Reynolds and Byfield are closed, we can do serious preventative maintenance. A meeting will be scheduled with Sonya Whipp.

Denise also reported that she and Joe Ciullo met, reviewed the SOS report and declared it moot. They also discussed using Reynolds School, purchasing the building to the south of it to use for an extension. It would be a mixed use building; invite the theater foundation to use space, create a cultural center, put District administration on the second floor, sell Oliver, and use the basement and first floors for Pre-K and K rooms. The new Commission is reported to be looking toward Pre-K mandates; until needed, the classrooms could be rented out to Head Start. However, since Oliver would have to be returned to the Town, it could be used for elderly housing, which is a common practice throughout New England. Denise said closing Oliver would be a big savings.

Karen commented that taking two K classes from Rockwell and two from Guiteras will not help grow a full track; it needs to be a piece of the bigger picture. The Task Force must continue to pursue a meeting with Diane Mederos and Diane Williamson. The COA #3 team will meet again and explore Byfield and an addition and review the Save Our Schools plan. There are concerns about the Pre-K mandate which will be brought up when the new Commissioner visits the District in September or when she meets with the RIASC Executive Board which John Saviano serves on.

COA #4: Open a Charter / Lab School (Ed Mara, Leader, Jennifer Berry, Kristen Quinn and Paul Silva)

Ed Mara said he has a meeting scheduled in August with Halsey Herreshoff, David Hibbit and Ken Marshall. David Hibbitt is willing to donate money for a charter school which the District would not support because it takes funding away from our schools. He will have much more information to report after his meeting.

Denise suggested Ed present different options to Mr. Hibbitt such as a lab school. Ed said Roger Williams had talked about a lab school in the past but the funding from the government disappeared.

Feasibility of January 2010 Timeline

Because of the lateness of this meeting, discussion will be had at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 8, 2009, 6:00 PM in the Oliver Administration Building

Adjournment

MOTION: At 8:25 PM, John Bento, seconded by Denise Arsenault, motioned to adjourn; the motion passed unanimously.

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